



LET US BE GAY

To Young Listeners,

ADOLF is taking up most of the space this week — no, not the usual Adolf — but a little gay rabbit, Adolf, who was born in the spring. And Little Adolfs are still being born in the spring, just as usual, in spite of the war, and they play gaily on the hill-tops and amongst the nettles, and they flaunt their little white tails at the other bad Adolfs as much as to say "Do what you like, Adolf H.—bomb us out of our burrows and we'll burrow more—do what you like Adolf H., we'll still be us—we'll still be gay."

*The Bees whatever Hitler does
Refuse to stop their happy buzz.*

*The Crocuses come out once more
Although they're useless in the war.
The little lambs, the little larks,
Are making seasonable remarks
Let us be gay. It is the Spring.*

*Though you and I must sweat and strive
To keep a home—and keep alive
This life whatever sour men say,
Is worth a struggle. Let's be gay!*

—A.P.H.

ADOLF, A RABBIT

WHEN we were children, our father often worked on the night-shift at the mines and he used to arrive home black and tired just as we came downstairs in our nightdresses. He loved the open morning, the crystal and the space, after a night down pit. He watched every bird, every stir in the trembling grass, answered the pews and tweeted to the wrens. He liked non-human things best. One sunny morning we were all sitting at the table when we heard his heavy slurring walk up the entry. We watched his black face as he came in.

My mother hastily poured out his tea. He went to pour it in his saucer. But instead of drinking it, he suddenly put something on the table among the tea-cups. A tiny brown rabbit! A small rabbit, a mere morsel sitting against the bread as still as if it were a made thing.

"A rabbit, a young one. Who gave it to you, Father?" But he only laughed and went to take off his coat. We pounced on the rabbit.

"Is it alive? Can you feel its heart beat?"

My father came back and sat down heavily in his arm-chair. He dragged his saucer to him, and blew his tea.

"Where did you get it, Father?"

"I picked it up," he said wiping his bare arm over his mouth and beard. On the field path my father had found a dead mother rabbit and three dead little ones—this one alive but unmoving.

"Why did you bring it?" my mother said. "You know what it will be."

"He must bring it. It's not big enough to live by itself. It would die," we shouted.

"Yes, and it will die now," she said.

"It won't die, Father, will it? Why will it? It won't."

The little rabbit sat on our lap, unmoving, its eyes wide and dark. We brought it milk, warm milk, and held it to its nose. We melted its mouth and whiskers with drops of milk. It gave no sign, did not even shake off the wet white drops. Somebody began to shed a few secret tears. "What did I say?" cried my mother, "take it and put it down in the field."

Her command was in vain. Wrapping it in a piece of flannel, I put it in an obscure corner of the cold parlour, and put a saucer of milk before its nose. At midday after school, creeping in we saw the rabbit still and unmoving in the piece of flannel. We put dandelion leaves to its nose. The sphinx was not more oblivious. At teatime however it had hopped a few inches out of its flannel.

Darkness came and my father set off to work. Once more the rabbit was wrapped in the old pit singlet. But now it was carried into the scullery and put in the copper fireplace, so that it might imagine it was in a burrow. The saucers were placed about, four or five of them, so that if he should chance to hop about he would find food.

Next morning when it was light I went downstairs. Opening the scullery door I heard a slight scuffle. Then I saw dabbles of milk all over the floor. And there, the rabbit, the tips of his ears showing behind a pair of boots. "Father, father, the rabbit's alive!"

By evening, the little creature was tame, quite tame. He was christened Adolf. He was too small to live in a hutch—he was so tiny. So we had him upstairs and he dropped tiny pills on

the bed and we were enchanted. He had the run of the house and he was perfectly happy, with his tunnels and his holes behind the furniture.

We loved him to take meals with us. He would sit on the table humping his little back, sipping his milk, shaking his whiskers and his tender ears, hopping off and hobbling back to his saucer, with an air of supreme unconcern. Suddenly he was alert. He hobbled a few tiny paces and reared himself up inquisitively at the sugar-basin. He fluttered his tiny fore-paws, and then reached and laid them on the edge of the basin, whilst he craned his thin neck and peeped in. He trembled his whiskers at the sugar, then did his best to lift down a lump. He rather liked warm tea, and butter as well as sugar. My mother hated his putting his nose in the food. And he loved to do it. And one day they overturned the cream jug between them and Adolf deluged his little chest, and was seized by his little ears by my mother and bounced down on the hearth-rug. There he shivered for a moment, then suddenly set off in a wild flight to the parlour. But Adolf was becoming too much for her. He dropped too many pills, and suddenly to hear him clumping downstairs when she was alone in the house, frightened her. But he brought his own doom on himself. The lace curtains in the parlour—my mother was rather proud of them—fell on the floor very full. One of Adolf's joys was to scuffle wildly through them as though through some foamy undergrowth. He had already torn rents in them. One day he entangled himself altogether. He screamed and whirled madly and brought down the curtain rod with a smash, right on to the best beloved pelagionium.

A heartless wildness had come over him and even we understood that he must go. So it was decided that my father should take him back to the wild woods.

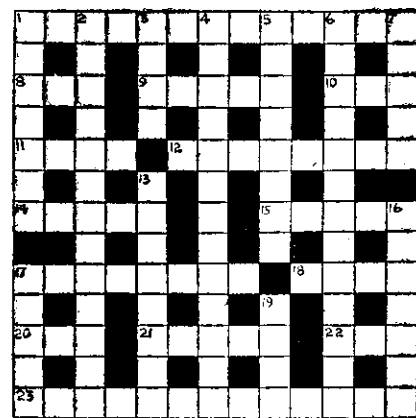
Sometimes I would go to the edge of the coppice and call softly and I would imagine bright eyes between the nettle stalks and the flash of a white scornful tail past the bracken . . . That was all. Wildness gains so soon upon its creatures.

(Adapted from D. H. Lawrence's "Adolf".)

THE LISTENER CROSSWORD

(No. 73)

(Constructed by R.W.C.)



Clues Across

- Uncle hidden in a rum cave is a great help with the housework.
- And 19 down. Initials of two famous British railways.
- Enticed.
- According to the song, "I'd like to roll to —"
- Mixed with 10 across, this gives you rain and oil.
- Re-unites (anag.).
- Boredom found in 5 down.
- A French liqueur.
- This legendary country, the setting for the Arthurian tales, reminds one of the zoo.
- Reverse this dress and you'll have something to boast about.
- I've changed here.
- He had a rod—an oar might have been more appropriate.
- Ran into initials well known in U.S.A.
- A nice, sad paper (anag.).

Clues Down

- A short curtain hidden in 1 across.
- Coins and vouchers may be changed into part of the furnishings.
- This ducking was really a swan.
- There's Tim's car! (anag.).
- Lasting.
- This has nothing to do with toy soldiers.
- Crooked roots.
- Carburetted hydrogen.
- Offence.
- Satan standing on his head?
- See 8 across.

THE LISTENER CROSSWORD

(Answer to No. 72)

